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Terri Ginsberg

Balagan and the Politics of Israel/Palestinian "Identity"

During an interview with *Balagan's* German director, Andres Veiel, Israeli actress Smadar 'Madi' Ma'ayan exclaims, "The Holocaust is the new religion. It is the opium of the masses in Israel." Madi's ostensibly Marxist exclamation occurs at the beginning, and is repeated toward the conclusion, of *Balagan* ["Chaos" or "A Big Mess"], an acclaimed but obscure 1993 German documentary covering the controversial 1991 Israeli theatrical production, *Arbeit Macht Frei M'Toiltland Europa* ["Work Liberates from the Deathland/Deutschland Europe"]. *Arbeit Macht Frei* is a station play, a mobile production spanning the Palestinian-Israeli town of Akko [Acre] and the nearby Ghetto Fighters Museum at Kibbutz Lohamai Hageta'ot, that dramatizes the relationship of the Jewish Holocaust to the Israel-Palestine conflict in a forceful and unusual way. Reminiscent of Polish stage director Jerzy Grotowski's Total Theater and of the Living Theater "happenings" of the 1960s and '70s, *Arbeit Macht Frei* features onstage performances in which actors play reflexive Israeli/Palestinian character types in the conventional context of a theater, along with offstage performances in which the same actors play 'real' museum dozenten, tour guides, and bus drivers who lead a participatory audience on a literal journey through the land of Israel and the 'holocaustal' social imaginary that has come to characterize it. *Balagan* not only documents this theatricalized journey but supplements it with actor interviews at various key locations in and around Akko, thereby coming itself to perform cinematically, as I shall elaborate, its own very particular interpretation of the experimental Holocaust play it takes as a critical documentary occasion. As the play's political problematics are played out cinematically, furthermore, they transfigure the Israel-Palestine conflict aesthetically into a techno-ideological *mise-en-abyme* that serves finally to dissimulate Marxism's radical hope for emancipation from ideological obscurantism and its attendant holocaustal effects. This hope is one to which I shall demonstrate *Balagan* can only allude 'obscenely,' through a figurative parody of

Balagan

German fascism; it is a hope shared nonetheless by both Palestinians and Israelis as well as by contemporary Germans vis-à-vis a pervasively belligerent U.S.—a hope which *Balagan* literally allegorizes by its peculiarly unstable, unsettled history.

During her first interview with Veiel, which is also the first interview in *Balagan*, Madi, the child of a Jewish-Czech Holocaust survivor, now married to *Arbeit Macht Frei's* director, David 'Dudi' Ma'ayan, describes her apparently Marxist exclamation and the performance associated with it as a "provocation," a "blasphemy," a "doing the anti-" vis-à-vis the sacralized memory of the Holocaust in Israel. In so doing, Madi underscores the critical, ostensibly radical function of her theatrical work. Indeed, Madi's proverbial quotation from the famous introduction to Marx's "A Contribution to Hegel's Philosophy of Right"¹ would seem to suggest that the Holocaust has come to signify an ideological concept, 'Holocaust,' in the post-Holocaust state of Israel.² On that suggestion, the Holocaust has been historicized, memorialized, and institutionalized by the Israeli culture and knowledge industries apropos of the commodity-form. The Israeli re-packaged 'Holocaust' has come, in other words, to comprise an ideational fetish bearing transhistorical, often mystical, connotations that dissimulate the global social rupture marked by the actual Holocaust. Inscribed as irreparable trauma, this fetish in turn obscures possible critical theoretical re-understandings of 'Holocaust' as a structurally overdetermined meaning-effect readily exploitable, both psychologically and economically, in the interests of ethnic chauvinism and transnational (under)development.

Balagan's provocative approach to German/Jewish/Israeli history garnered it commercial screenings and numerous awards in Germany (first Prize from the International Federation of Film Societies; Honorable Mention at the 1993 Leipzig International Documentary Festival; the Peace Film Prize at the 1994 Berlin International Film Festival; the 1994 German Film Prize; the 1994 Otto Sprenger Prize; and a nomination for Film of the Month by the Evangelical Filmworks). The film was denounced, however, for its iconoclasy and apparent radicalism by print media critics in the U.S., where its exhibition was limited to film festivals and where it is now largely unavailable.³ In what follows, I shall argue that the critical

perspective offered on 'Holocaust' by *Balagan* is neither original nor radical to either the German or Western European context, and that, in turn, the negative reviews *Balagan* received upon its release have strongly misrecognized the film's ideological orientation. Ignoring the way in which *Balagan*'s formal structures intersect with those of the theatrical *Arbeit Macht Frei*, these reviews overlooked the crucial aesthetic-effects presented by *Balagan* as *cinematic performance*, thereby obscuring the way in which those effects function vis-à-vis prevailing discourse on the role of 'Holocaust' in the formation of an Israeli/Palestinian 'identity.'

In considering *Balagan*'s European production and distribution contexts, one need only recall New German Cinema's explicit call for a national 'coming to terms with the past,' which played no small part during the 1970s and '80s in an increasingly international series of public debates over the history and contemporary significance of the Nazi era, not least for the state of Middle East politics.⁴ These debates included the German *Historikerstreit* and similar, earlier occasions in France, all of which attracted global attention and have since come to inform the direction of European art cinema.⁵ In view of this culture-discursive history, it is hardly surprising that Veiel, speaking of *Balagan*, would describe himself as a "second-generation perpetrator," or that he would include interview footage of Madi describing *Arbeit Macht Frei*'s Israeli performers as "second-generation victims" who have "created a monster"—a perspective which Veiel rehearses contentiously in a contemporary print-media interview as "the self-infecting wound Israel."⁶

The scholarly writing which has emerged around this critical perspective, and which analogizes or otherwise compares the politics of German fascism to those of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, has likewise garnered international attention and actually begun to receive a modicum of academic legitimacy in North America, primarily through the publications of Israeli "New Historians" and sympathetic scholars on the U.S., Canadian, and British Left.⁷ Similar work, however, on *Balagan*'s relationship to this controversial historiographic discourse is noticeably scant. The only extant article on the film, published in the

conservative Jewish studies journal, *Prooftexts*, re-articulates *Balagan*'s implicit engagement of the Israeli new historiography through a depoliticized appropriation of Marianne Hirsch's theory of "postmemory," whereupon an effective analysis of what I shall describe as *Balagan*'s deep-structural, *cinematic performance* of Israel's rather incomplete 'coming to terms with the past' is thoroughly elided.⁸

It is in fact my contention that the unfavorable print media reception and ongoing marginalization/suppression of *Balagan* and its scholarly analysis outside of Germany is due only superficially to the film's explicit critique of Zionism, and still less is a reaction to its German provenance, both of which possibilities entail facile assumptions that *Balagan* is a blatant and unmitigated example of Right revisionism. Not only have German art films always been produced with an eye to international markets⁹ numerous acclaimed, widely discussed and available films of the New German Cinema have inscribed anti-Zionist perspectives to varying degrees.¹⁰ Instead of subscribing to facile assumptions, I argue more seriously that *Balagan* inscribes a postmodern vision of the Jewish Holocaust by which the film at once performs that event's global commoditization and supplies its critique through means that are neither simply reactionary nor exclusively 'German' but, on the larger vision, profoundly *christological*. On these grounds, *Balagan* is at once uncannily threatening to non-German, especially U.S. audiences, for whom the envisaging of 'Holocaust' as Christ-like "existent universal"¹¹ hits uncomfortably close to ideological—Judeo-Christian, capitalist-ethical—home, while the film also continues to serve post-unification German audiences with the sort of self-edifying, moral-psychological instruction that was widespread in Germany throughout the postwar era. This kind of instruction has often been considered less conducive to historical mourning-work than to the marshaling of a conservative *ressentiment*.¹²

By 'christological,' I refer to a universalizing frame of intelligibility for which history is the reality-effect of an irremediably fallible human telos which plays out repeatedly as blood sacrifice and is exemplified by periodic instances of social—primarily, if sometimes only symbolically, Jewish—catastrophe. In the context of Holocaust studies, christology entails belief in the moral exemplarity of Judeocide: scholars as theoretically disparate as theologian Franklin Littell and philosopher

James Watson have insisted, for instance, that the Holocaust 'proves' the logic of christic sacrifice and potentiates religious conversion to Christianity.¹³ Whereas a traditional christology will profess an ideologico-historical supersession of Judaism by Christianity, modern and contemporary reinscriptions articulate secularized versions of this myth to posthistorical theories of communitarian 'dialogue' and 'ethics,' themselves derived from a Protestant tradition that draws strongly upon, while significantly reducing the significance of, Judaism.¹⁴ Indeed christology is originally a rearticulation of Jewish messianism, itself a rearticulation of biblical, pre-Judaic pan- and polytheistic eschatologies which became properly 'Christian' only in the wake of Judeo-Christianity's Roman co-optation, reduction, and institutionalization.¹⁵

Madi's first utterance of the proverbial Marxist dictum would appear at first to counter an ascription of christology to *Balagan*. It is well-known that Marx was critical of Christianity, having seen it as the theological discourse most effective for underwriting the expansionist logic of capitalism, even and especially as Christian theology—unlike Judaism—ultimately espouses merely a submissive, distinctly resigned hope for emancipation therefrom.¹⁶ Israeli and Anglo-American New Historians have nonetheless re-understood Marx's claim in complementary, if slightly altered, terms, as facilitating an elucidation of ideological structures by which subjugated Palestinians are positioned, much like European Jews before them, as geopolitical barter-balls in the Western capitalist struggle for global domination. As I shall elucidate, *Balagan*'s sympathetic portrayal of Khaled Abu-Ali, a Muslim-Palestinian Israeli and one of *Arbeit Macht Frei*'s central characters, places the film into partial consonance with this New Historiographic perspective. Khaled vociferously opposes the Israeli occupation of Palestine while working closely with Dudi Ma'ayan's primarily Jewish-Israeli experimental theater ensemble and articulating an albeit ambivalent "belief" that the Holocaust "exists." The example of Khaled illustrates clearly the New Historians' view that Israeli-defined 'Holocaust' interpellates Palestinian as well as Jewish subjectivities, positioning them not as 'terroristic' antagonists but as prisoners of an 'unhappy consciousness'¹⁷ who are searching desperately to extricate themselves from a struggle often perceived as endless and

irreconcilable. For Palestinians, that struggle is one which decries and rejects colonialist expropriation of their lands; for Jewish Israelis, by contrast, it is one which resists the holocaustal antisemitism that, at least in the Jewish-Israeli imaginary, persists in Israel/Palestine despite the abstract, asymmetrical logic such a cross-historical transposition entails. The positioning of Khaled as a geopolitical barter-ball imprisoned in an 'unhappy consciousness' certainly satisfies criteria not only for identifying but also, as I shall illustrate, for acknowledging key christological elements in *Balagan*.

* * * * *

On the one hand, *Balagan* explicitly invokes Marx, to whom christology would appear distasteful. Nevertheless, the film carries out its own form of christological narrative. This *dissimulatory* tendency of *Balagan* recalls the Nazi *rétro* film phenomenon, which Holocaust cultural critic Saul Friedländer has castigated as obscene kitsch, but which German film critics Reimer and Reimer have lauded as albeit incomplete instances of cultural mourning-work.¹⁸ In either respect, *Balagan* participates in what cultural theorist Peter Michelson defines, regarding the 'obscene,' as "the Greek sense of bringing onstage what is customarily kept offstage in western culture," a practice which entails a presumably necessary aestheticization of the so-called un(re)presentable, "a perceptual alteration whereby the obscene, a species of the ugly, is reconstituted to a function akin to that of the beautiful."¹⁹ On this definition, it is possible to understand *Balagan*'s 'obscenity'—its christological reformulation of a Marxist critique of Israeli 'Holocaust'—as parodic, as referencing ironically an abject, carnivalesque condition that adopts qualities simultaneously of the culturally offensive, perversely pleasurable, and socially threatening. Put another way, it is possible to say that 'obscene' *Balagan* plays *épater le bourgeois*.²⁰

Explicit examples of this 'obscene' strategy include sequences in *Balagan* which depict onstage *ménages* of *Arbeit Macht Frei*'s actors engaged in various extreme activities, including: a topless woman spinning naked in an old, metal washtub while ingesting and expelling mush; another, similarly clad woman flailing wildly while enclosed within an Eichmannesque glass cage stuffed with suffocating

layers of shredded paper; a practically naked Madi clinging to a wire mesh fence, arms extended in christic formation and lower bodily stratum draped in diaper-like rags; the same actress, in the same state of indispose, swinging inverted from a hanging rope and later blaring incoherently, tongue depressed and teeth blackened, into a microphone; and a third central character, Moni Yosef, an Iraqi-Jewish (Mizrachi) Israeli who must reconcile his theatrical career with his observant religious background, performing gymnastics while wearing a Nazi S.S. uniform. Perhaps the most 'obscene' of these activities is one that features a frontally nude Khaled beating himself with a rubber truncheon: in Holocaust cinema, male frontal nudity is generally confined to the depiction of corpses.²¹

Possibly more remarkable, though, are *Balagan's* editorial alternations between these extreme corporeal representations and moments filmed in post-theatrical settings both backstage and offstage, which together form a veritable montage by which the sanctity of Israel as a Jewish nation-state, already implicitly referenced through the political intertexts of the onstage *ménages*, is itself, in Madi's words, overtly "blasphemed." A vivid example of this critical effect involves an extended shot of the perpetually naked Madi lying prone onstage apparently extracting hidden food from her vagina, cross-cut with shots of her and Veiel listening pleasurefully at Madi's home to the *Hörstwessellied*, a notorious Nazi anthem which Madi compares favorably, if somewhat facetiously, to the "roaring animal noise" of Zionist hymns. A related example involves shots of the frontally nude, self-flagellating Khaled cross-cut with a backstage scene of physical contact between himself and Moni that may be read as homoerotic.

Their shocking qualities notwithstanding, these on-/offstage montage sequences distinguish *Balagan* from earlier Nazi *rétro* films, vis-à-vis which 'obscenity' is usually explained as a textual-effect of "libidinal economy."²² According to the Freudo-Marxist paradigm through which that concept was initially theorized, textual-effects may be understood literally, as potentially emancipatory enactments of otherwise sublimated psycho-sexual drives. Because of their purported liberatory character, however, such effects are also considered vulnerable to containment, and the drives they manifest subject to repression. *Balagan* is certainly replete with aspects of this psycho-

sexual dynamic, which at its worst has been used to attribute the rise of fascism to a perceived increase in the social incidence of sexual perversion seen heterocentrically as a homosexual phenomenon.²³ But as a postmodern instance furthermore documenting a theatrical occasion, the 'obscenity' *Balagan* inscribes is more correctly defined as an *ostensive performance* rather than as a textualized representation of the libidinal function. Following performance theorist Keir Elam, "ostensivity" refers to a theatrical condition in which the formal structures and dramatological field of a performance become so nearly indistinguishable that the performance itself comes to take epistemological priority over what would be considered, in a conventional theatrical context, its distinct actional and referential content.²⁴ Whereas libidinal economy may be understood in light of the modern 'repressive hypothesis,' for which desublimation of psycho-sexual energies is at once attractive for its emancipatory promise and repulsive for the dashed hopes—including especially fascist developments—it presumably also prefigures, the performatives of ostensivity assume, by albeit related contrast, the reconfiguration of 'repression' into an antifoundational, 'virtual' condition of perpetual psychodramatic 'flux.'²⁵

Balagan establishes its ostensivity by documenting a theatrical occasion that is both non-original and epic in quality. Indeed *Arbeit Macht Frei* is based upon and references intertextually another theatrical production, *Cherli Ka Cherli* (director David Horowitz, Jerusalem Khan Theatre, 1978), itself a parody of a culturally entrenched Israeli practice, *massachet*, a kibbutznik ritual comprising a communal meal and lively series of non-linear, highly theatricalized performances "revolving around...a mind drama [or] conceptual confrontation between personified notions."²⁶ *Arbeit Macht Frei* supplements *Cherli Ka Cherli's* psychodramaticity with the Brechtian notion that characterological conflict refracts, and may be marshaled to engage, ideological problematics of audience reality.²⁷ Hence *Arbeit Macht Frei* disassociates its characters from realist conventions that invite audience identification and catharsis, and instead recasts them as "sociopsychic archetypes," reified figures who recall Brecht's theory of epic distanciation [*verfremdungsmachen*] for their transferential redirection of the spectatorial will to identify back onto the post-theatrical world. In

effect, these figures are literal allegories, typological ciphers which problematize the security of the traditional 'fourth wall.' *Arbeit Macht Frei*'s audience is brought physically into the performance space, seated amidst set properties, addressed directly, and compelled to *move with* the performance, to enter its spatio-temporality, to *encounter* it, to *enliven* it, to make *it happen*. By this technique, the play is hyperrealized, its post-theatrical scene destabilized and unsettled yet supplied with a revised symbolic logic by which its post-Holocaust inhabitants may renegotiate the terms of contemporary social crisis.

Yet, as Elam notes, the political grounding of *Arbeit Macht Frei*'s epic construction diverges from that of Brecht, an avowed Marxist, in its appropriation of Jerzy Grotowski's concept of Total Theater, with its explicit christological proselytic of self-sacrifice through liberatory-salvific exploration and display of extreme bodily experience.²⁸ In addition to enacting extreme corporeality, Madi describes her performative "blasphemy" of 'Holocaust' in the spirit of Grotowski, as a haptic allegory of everyday life in Israel/Palestine, which she compares to being engulfed in a "well," a "big hole," a "wound," a *schwarze loch* [black hole]. Setting aside for a moment the problem such a description holds out for feminism,²⁹ these comparisons all suggest a life of profound existential disorientation, *balagan*, that, in Madi's words, can be "tasted" and "touched" but never managed or contained by reigning social institutions. To achieve a modicum of peace in the face of *balagan*, says Madi, she "will have to go to India." *Balagan* incorporates this mystical, orientalist phenomenology, otherwise intended as an avenue for Holocaust mourning-work, by giving it narratological centrality and establishing Madi at its apogee. Contrasting a contemporary Israeli film on the same play, *Al Tigu Li B'Shoah* [*Don't Touch My Holocaust*] (directed by Asher Talim), to which difference from the German film I shall return, briefly, *Balagan*'s emphasis upon Madi's visceral extremity and haptic significance positions her as the apotheosis of a *superprotagonal triad*, a tripartite reflexive figuration oriented toward superseding and dissolving identitarian borders between the film's central Mizrahi-Israeli and Muslim-Palestinian characters, Moni and Khaled, even and especially as those borders demarcate, or limn, the (post)theatrical space ostensibly.

According to Gad Kaynar, who has analyzed the phenomenon in some detail with respect to *Arbeit Macht Frei*, the "superprotagonist" may be defined as a theatrical figure who is at once spectator and actor as well as neither of these.³⁰ Superprotagonality, as distinct from mere ostensivity, subverts the standard Brechtian praxis of distancing, insofar as its post-theatrical effectuality is indiscriminate, nay ecumenical: anyone is fair game for its proselytic, anyone an audience for its hyperreal transference, anyone an exemplar of its social lesson, which is thusly transhistorical and aesthetically based. I shall now elaborate how, at the expense of critiquing the divisiveness and asymmetricality which actually comprise Israeli/Palestinian reality, it is precisely *Balagan*'s viscerally ostensive, hypersecular superprotagonality which dissimulates those social conditions aesthetically, and which, in turn, cagily distinguishes the film's ideology critique of 'Holocaust' from that of a properly Marxist analysis.

An overriding example of this dissimulatory tendency is the way in which *Balagan*'s superprotagonal structure will finally congeal, recalling nineteenth-century racist discourse, into a 'post-semitic' icon, a tropic figure which allegorizes christologically the uneven division and ideological overdeterminacy of the triadic relationship between the film's three central characters. In order that this may occur, an ethical and political differentiation is first established between Khaled and Moni, the film's two ethnic 'Arabs,' whose relationship in turn becomes one of an asymmetrical dyad that rehearses the asymmetrical positioning of Palestinians and Arab Jews in Israel/Palestine itself.

Khaled and Moni's uneven differentiation is structured largely through intellectual but also parallel montage. As regards ethical unevenness, Khaled, a secular Moslem, is shown briefly, via a fragmented shot sequence, dancing naked onstage, whereby his transgression of the Islamic proscription against public male nudity is rendered evident and only later, cursorily explained by Khaled himself as a counter to perceived Palestinian "backwardness." In a subsequent scene, by contrast, Moni, an observant Jew, is allotted steady and significant screen time in which to explain his choice to uphold similar Judaic law by refusing to perform without clothes. A similarly structured instance politically reorients this contrast between the ostensibly ethical Jew, Moni, and the ostensibly unethical Moslem,

Khaled. Scenes comprising shots of Khaled's impoverished, primarily Palestinian home town of Shachnin in the Galilee, depicted under constant IDF surveillance, are juxtaposed with scenes comprising shots of Moni's comfortable and well-protected home in Akko and that of his brother, a recalcitrant settler, in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. While ostensibly opening the film onto a critique of the Israeli economic underdevelopment of Palestine, a concomitant layer of the juxtaposition tends to undercut any such possibility. In this concomitant regard, Khaled is portrayed coming to experience alienation from darker-skinned Palestinian "friends" who themselves have undergone Israeli military arrest and imprisonment during the first Intifada, and who refer to Khaled as a "collaborator" after he admits giving Israeli soldiers rides to and from Akko. By contrast, Moni is portrayed coming to experience empathy for the plight of his right-wing brother after visiting his family's underground bunker, a veritable military stronghold reminiscent of Holocaust-era resistance fighting and located in an illegal Jewish settlement near the Syrian border. The effect of this twofold structuring is to render Khaled's membership in Dudi Ma'ayan's theater company an understandable effect of his overt disdain for and desire to distance himself from purportedly entrenched Palestinian violence and cultural stagnation, whereas Moni's participation in the same company is shown rooted in a socially respectable, albeit ambivalent love and concern for his post-Holocaust Jewish-Israeli brethren.

At the film's narrative-tropological register, where the ethical and political nearly converge, this uneven, differential construction is never ironized but instead reaffirmed. Khaled, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, comes to figure as a 'shifter,'³¹ an 'unstable' signifier who oscillates stereotypically between expressions of belief in the "existence" of the Holocaust and Holocaust denial, and, by political extension, between hope for the largely disparaged possibility of transforming Israel/Palestine into a secular, multicultural national entity and resignation to the only slightly more accepted idea of dividing the region binationally into 'separate-but-equal' cantons. By contrast, Moni, a Jewish Israeli, figures as a comparatively stable, if not monumental, signifier; although Mizrachi, he remains a convinced Zionist who expresses the generally unfounded but nonetheless widely

acknowledged post-Holocaust Jewish-Israeli fear of being 'pushed into the sea' by erstwhile Palestinian enemies, even as he voices sympathy for their subjugated plight.³²

Despite their uneven differentiation, however, and because of the montage structure facilitating it, *Balagan's* two 'Arab' characters, Moni and Khaled, are likewise brought into identification, but in terms of (an anthropologically disproved) discourse of organic kinship rather than their demonstrably shared social history as 'Arabs.' When they are portrayed embracing during a backstage rehearsal, for instance, their mutually balding heads are highlighted, giving each a decidedly phallic, almost homoerotic appearance. Less implicit is the visual reminder provided by Khaled's onstage frontal nudity of the circumcision ritual common to Islam and Judaism, which, notwithstanding real theological differences between the Muslim and Judaic observation and interpretation of that ancient ritual, associates Khaled and Moni ethnocorporeally, that is, racially.³³ These examples are but two in the film which illustrate how *Balagan* refigures *ethnicity*, a national-cultural category subject to political and economic determination, into a *racial* category,³⁴ and how it thereby mutually 'identifies' these ethnic 'Arabs' by positioning them ahistorically, as biological males capable of reproducing 'semitic' bodies, whereupon their asymmetrical differentiation appears resolvable 'organically' rather than politically, through the implementation of racist ideologies originating in Christian Europe rather than real, social-structural change of the kind offered, *inter alia*, by both Islam and Judaism in their middle-eastern as well as diasporic, and including their secular and hybrid configurations.³⁵

Balagan's racist construction of Palestinians and Mizrachi Jews as 'semites,' eerily reminiscent of Nazi ideology, subsequently consolidates within the context of the film's christologic, as the 'semitic' is fetishistically hypostatized through the Ashkenazic Madi's iconic troping of its 'Arab' matrix. This iconic function is cultivated on two registers, the first of which becomes evident during a remarkable scene in which Madi is filmed at home preparing for the role of "Zelma," an elderly, physically decrepit Eastern-European Holocaust survivor who is featured as a museum dozent during the Ghetto Fighters Museum section of *Arbeit Macht Frei*.

In this scene, Madi is portrayed donning her Zelma costume before a mirror in a shadowy, candle-lit room. Because both Madi and her reflection are visible, an initial impression is given that the scene is framed in two-shot, and that Zelma is Madi's alter-ego. Yet Madi's transformation into Zelma entails a drastic alteration in the former's appearance and deportment, especially where age and stature are concerned, indicating something more and other than ego alterity. While gazing into the mirror at her gradually altering image, Madi describes Zelma using words with which Nazi concentration camp prisoners have often been described: as ghostlike, representative of "the living dead," a "two thousand year-old woman...neither dead nor alive" who subsists "in the twilight zone" and "comes and goes" randomly. Here again the scene invokes Brechtian theory, in this instance that for which a mere costume change can signify a radical character transformation subject to auto-critique by the very performer enacting the change. But the scene's mirror-effect also invokes the Lacanian Althusser, a structuralist Marxist philosopher for whom "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."³⁶ Thus while the young, vivacious Madi transforms into the decrepit, funereal Zelma, a prototypically romantic, Christo-European ideology of eternal feminine hell may be seen to qualify the imaginary condition of Jewish decrepitude represented within the scene, nearly overshadowing any attendant, pre-European sense of that suffering as described so frequently in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed the cinematic framing of Madi and her reflection in two-shot, the very matrix of auto-critique in the scene, literalizes a subjective cleavage between the Israeli and European layers of her characterological persona, under the refractive purview of which the 'hell' that has come thusly under scrutiny is re-articulated to a European social imaginary that is certainly represented by the holocaustal Zelma, but that also must be seen ostensibly, as an ideological site hailing a third figure, Madi/Zelma, the Ashkenazi-Israeli actress' very legacy as a tortured, haunted, "wandering", Ashkenazi Jew.³⁷ The scene elevates Madi as such into a self-reflexive Israeli type, a congealed, corporeal, almost christic image of eternal Jewish suffering that at one and the same time allegorizes a particularly European, nay Zionist envisaging of the Israeli/Palestinian real. In effect the transformation of Madi into

the 'hellish'-holocaustal signifier, Madi/Zelma, comes to position her as a performative matrix of split Ashkenazi-Israeli subjectivity vis-à-vis which the post-theatrical Madi may come to expose and "blaspheme" the reputed persistence of Jewish suffering in Israel/Palestine through her own subsequent actions beyond the mirror, including ongoing and ensuing interviews with the post-Nazi German Veiel.

At a second register, however, the scene's potential function as global self-criticism is subverted, as Madi/Zelma is herself repositioned as an aesthetic supplement to the asymmetrical, racialized 'Arab' dyad, Moni/Khaled. Paradigmatic of this ludic switch is a late sequence in which shots of Madi reminiscing about a visit to her father's pre-war home in Czechoslovakia are juxtaposed with shots of Khaled visiting his family in the besieged Palestinian-Israeli town of Shachnin, and with shots of Moni visiting his brother in the Israeli-occupied Golan. These juxtapositions are in one sense thematically unified, insofar as the familial 'return' depicted in each instance proves dramatically unsatisfying. In contrast to prior visits and notwithstanding his explicit anti-occupation politics, for example, Khaled displays confusion over his assumed ethno-political alliances and affinities after receiving sharp rebukes from family and friends to whom he reveals his participation in *Arbeit Macht Frei*. By comparison, Moni, who had previously criticized the Israeli occupation of Palestine, reverses his politics after touring his brother's underground armed bunker, henceforth reaffirming his support for Zionist colonization of the region on what can best be interpreted as nostalgic, sentimental grounds. Similarly Madi, who initially evinces enthusiasm over her recounted visit to Czechoslovakia, subsequently expresses disappointment over having discovered her father's childhood home occupied and inhabited by non-Jews.

Although these unfulfilling, ambivalent 'returns' clearly evoke salient political ironies, not least insofar as the repeated dissatisfactions they represent parallel discursively the modality of capitalist desire vis-à-vis the commodity-form, their structural supplementation by/under Madi/Zelma precludes a serious critique of either that modality or its political manifestation as colonialism, whether in the form of the Ashkenazi-Jewish occupation of Palestine or, previously, of the National Socialist occupation of Eastern Europe.³⁸ This is

because the sequence in question never finally grounds Madi/Zelma's positioning as mythological 'wanderer' in the material conditions which are known to have given rise historically to that myth and its abiding, colonialist rationale.³⁹ Instead recalling Heidegger, Madi/Zelma figures across this particular montage sequence as *essentially* homeless.⁴⁰

In context of its various juxtapositions, for example, the sequence offers a depiction of Moni's and Khaled's respective familial locations, whereas Madi's paternal home in Eastern Europe is never shown. No archival footage of a comparable location is inserted for illustrative purposes during Madi's recollection, as would be customary in a conventional Holocaust documentary, nor, instead, is footage of the Holocaust inserted to explain the exclusion of any such material. In lieu of either option, a shot is inserted of a present-day IDF road sign demarcating a border between Israeli and Palestinian (Israeli-occupied) territory. Not only does this road sign's particular referent, a dividing line between would-be ethnic homelands that are each basically European colonies, contradict the very notion of 'home', it allegorizes the antifoundational, peregrine quality of Madi/Zelma's mythological 'homelessness', even as it indexes, literally, the asymmetrical, racialized dyad, Moni/Khaled.

In other words, taken in context of the visual absence of Madi's paternal, Eastern European home, the Israeli/Palestinian road sign serves as a rhetorical means by which to collapse the christo-romantic ideology of eternal wandering associated with Madi/Zelma and, by extension, the Holocaust into an imaginary non-place of familial memory, and to further conflate the genealogical vacuum—the *schwarze loch*—thereby attributable to Madi's oedipal pursuit with the global political history by which force, and through which ensuing conflict, the borders riving Israel and Palestine—dividing Jews from Palestinians—have actually been determined. Put another way, Madi/Zelma's ideological function is as a supranational signifier of christological irresolution traceable both to the German-Israeli nexus contextualizing *Balagan's* very production, not to mention its historical conditions of possibility, and to the U.S.-dominated global industry actually enabling and facilitating both of these.⁴¹ Through this function, *Balagan* not only represents, but *itself performs* the racist,

(a)symmetrical relationship allegorized aesthetically by Madi/Zelma vis-à-vis Moni/Khaled, at once unveiling and obscuring the ideological determinants of the Israel-Palestine conflict which Madi/Zelma at once 'obscenely' embodies and reflexively transcends; and, in so doing, it transcribes *Arbeit Macht Frei's* mobile-theatrical ostensivity into a *global cinematic* fetish.

A key figure in this transcription is, not unpredictably, Andres Veiel himself. As a veritable 'outsider', a German in Israel, and a filmmaker documenting a theatrical production, Veiel easily mirrors Madi/Zelma's iconic function as world-weary wanderer; and, as a relatively well-funded European director, he is able literally to ensure the global dissemination of this iconic function—in the commodity-form of *Balagan*. The example of Veiel's peculiar mode of interviewing Moni and Khaled underscores this exploitative function. Several times throughout the film, Veiel is shown accompanying Moni and Khaled on their respective visits home, where, despite the latter's impressive multilingualism, Veiel conducts his interviews with them, as with the polyglossic Madi/Zelma, in English, the linguistic vehicle of contemporary U.S.-dominated international trade and commerce. During these interviews, Veiel remains safely offscreen, his questions and comments excluded from the soundtrack. When his voice is finally heard (this occurs only once in the film), it is not in the context of speaking with these 'semitic' men, from whom he will remain effectively disassociated for the film's duration, but in the company of the 'eternal feminine' Madi, during her 'obscene' rehearsal of the *Hörstweßellied*, which is not only a Nazi anthem but a commodified musical recording for which Madi says she "will pay" Veiel an exorbitant sum in order to own it in its entirety.

The 'outsider' Veiel in this way would seem to allegorize Madi's iconic function to the global cultural register. His film, *Balagan*, however, would seem likewise to subvert any imputation of a profit motive—at least initially. In the scene just described, for example, Madi becomes the German Veiel's Jewish feminine prototype, their roles confounding through a process that recalls the rhetorical construction of Madi/Zelma. On the one hand, Madi veritably seduces Veiel, via the *Hörstweßellied*, into appearing in his own film, whereupon he becomes vulnerable to an albeit critical reification and an

eventual grafting alongside Moni and Khaled onto the superprotagonal configuration. On the other hand, Veiel's self-proclaimed status as "child-of-perpetrators" easily parallels the 'eternal suffering' already attributed to Madi/Zelma in her status as (child of) a Holocaust survivor with all its racialized, aestheticized baggage. Hence, as Veiel is drawn thusly into the *balagan*, *Balagan*, at once his representative and instrument, relinquishes any claim it may seem to have staked, as a documentary, to objectivity or coherence, qualities generally considered necessary to successful commodification. Through Veiel's 'ostensive' positioning with/as Madi/Zelma, that is, *Balagan* becomes part and parcel of the superprotagonal project, effectively condemned, like the christo-mythology it inscribes, to holocaustal self-sacrifice in the name of baseless, perpetual—'Jewish'—suffering.

By the same token, and as an effect of Veiel's very subsumption into the superprotagonal configuration, the exploitative function which Veiel seems nonetheless to signify remains an instantiation-effect of Madi/Zelma: it is she and the Israel-Palestine conflict she allegorizes through her aesthetic triangulation of the racialized Moni-Khaled dyad, not Veiel and his German provenance, which elevates *Balagan* to the status of that conflict's iconic exemplar and upholds it as an 'eternal,' commodificatory matrix of Middle East crisis. The paradigmatic instance of this aesthetic-effect involves the positioning of Madi's second utterance of Marx's famous dictum as an aside to a scene in which *Arbeit Macht Frei*'s ensemble cast and Jewish-Israeli audience are shown participating mutually in a hyper-reflexive group confession of 'shared feeling' regarding the Holocaust. In this scene, video recordings of audience declarations about the Holocaust and *Arbeit Macht Frei* are broadcast live onstage. Moni and Khaled provoke these declarations by forcefully interviewing audience members from within glass booths lining the stage. In the course of these veritable interrogations, Moni and Khaled's 'semitic' relationality, thus far figured corporeally via the superprotagonal Madi/Zelma, broaches a *hermeneutic* register that will effectively clinch the politics of her, and by extension *Balagan*'s, christic iconicity. Facilitated by intercutting between their faces as reflected in the glass, Moni and Khaled's relationality undergoes a transcription from the plane of organic kinship

to that of imaginary dialogics, whereupon the two reified characters are now identified intersubjectively, in *cognitive*, not merely biological, terms: they are no longer merely biological 'semites,' naturally identifiable by their respective circumcisions; they are cognitive 'semites,' likewise identifiable by their stereotypical Arab 'wrath,' their 'despotic' oriental behavior. The cross-cutting during the scene back to Madi's Marxist exclamation serves both to underscore and ironize this transcription, suggesting implicitly that the cognitive function it signifies marks that ideological means by which hypermediated confessions may be garnered and 'virtual' rituals may be conducted in Israel/Palestine which simulate the mass religiosity critiqued by Marx as well as literalize the global cinematicity allegorized by Veiel and performed by *Balagan*.

In effect, the racially triangulated Israel-Palestine conflict is transposed onto the commoditized plane of global cinematic culture as secular christology writ large. With Madi/Zelma as its apotheosis ('Madi' means 'messiah' in Arabic and 'budding fruit' in Hebrew), *Balagan* enacts a romanticized, post-Holocaust performance of Israeli/Palestinian 'identity' as *fateful triangulation* of biologically fallible 'semites' vis-à-vis European/American crusaders/mass murderers.⁴²

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This troubling interpretation strongly contrasts the meaning and significance of the Israeli film, *Al Tigu Li B'Shoah*, which I discuss at length elsewhere.⁴³ Like *Balagan*, *Al Tigu* follows *Arbeit Macht Frei*'s ostensive personification of characters whose discursive and perspectival conflictuality rather than psychodramatic analogics compel a series of 'obscene' matrices which trope theatrical and post-theatrical contexts into global cinematic, allegorical nodes. Although by no means free of ideological contradictions,⁴⁴ *Al Tigu* nonetheless contrasts *Balagan*'s performance and philosophy of ostensivity. Indeed the Mizrachi-directed Israeli film problematizes the christological discourse of superprotagonality as it deconstructs the notion of aesthetic telos while remaining structurally founded within an albeit differential sense of political-historical development. *Al Tigu* at once recalls and problematizes the European nascence of Zionism, the conception and implementation of the Holocaust, and the continuing

role of postwar Germany, alongside the U.S., as an arms supplier and financier to Israel.⁴⁵ By articulating characterological conflict to an historical problematic, that is, *Al Tigu* does not merely expose, aesthetically, the ideology--and reality--effects of the Israel-Palestine conflict but presents them in the context of locating conceptual tools for its political resolution.

Al Tigu's differences from *Balagan* foreground the latter's real distance from the radical politics implied by the film's repetition of Madi's proverbial referencing of Marx. It may be more befitting, therefore, to designate *Balagan* an ideologically 'obscene' instantiation of the "opium of the masses" to which Madi's references actually refer. In this case, however, the question of *Balagan's* marginalization and uneven reception may turn less on the strength than on the weakness of its christologicality, here referring specifically to the capacity of its ostensive performativity to stand in for a materialist analysis of the Israel-Palestine conflict while nonetheless exposing and exhibiting its deeply pervasive sociopsychological effects. After all, inasmuch as Zionism has been designated a travesty or blasphemy of *Judaism* by many secular (including some Mizrahi) and religious (including some ultra-observant) Jews,⁴⁶ an aesthetic performance that allegorizes Zionism to the so-called Christian 'heresy' and its self-fulfilling prophecy of holocaustal doom seems uncannily appropriate to an enlarged understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict. A case in point is the current global reaction to the near-genocidal extremity into which the Israeli occupation of Palestine has devolved,⁴⁷ evidenced not least in Germany by massive anti-globalization rallies that have drawn none-too-explicit--and justifiable--connections between the U.S.-Iraq War and the Israeli occupation, but also by a similarly undeniable, documented increase in right-wing anti-Jewish, alongside more preponderant anti-Muslim, incidents throughout the European Union and North America. On this reasoning alone, *Balagan* is worthy of sustained viewing and analysis and should, therefore, be made more widely available.

Yet, whereas it must be conceded that *Balagan* is a limit-text, going farther than most Holocaust films before or since in problematizing the Israel-Palestine conflict, the film must also be criticized for itself becoming a self-sacrificial instance, a liminal cinematic occasion that sustains its 'burden of guilt' on racialized, aestheticized grounds,

ultimately presuming to explain the Israel-Palestine conflict by literally performing the old anti-Semitic canard that Jews are a 'composite' race who necessarily invite and perpetuate suffering and 'chaos' for their 'obscene' refusal to relinquish their 'rigid' covenantal beliefs and 'oriental' customs. This is not only a mythological gesture *per se*, it actually undermines the effectiveness of *Balagan's* own ostensible anti-Zionism by serving to obfuscate the very fact of an eschatological tradition *within Judaism itself* which has served ideologically throughout the modern period to rationalize a constitutionally illegitimate, ethnocratic Israeli state.⁴⁸ It is indeed vis-à-vis the monopolistic coercion and exclusivity practiced by Jewish messianic Zionists that secular Jewish Israelis have often utilized Christian symbols and imagery to express abstract, transcendental, even 'obscene' parodic ideas--ideas which many messianists have ironically welcomed in the interests of preserving a Jewish-Israeli hegemon.⁴⁹ Although such utilization is facilitated by the perceived absence of a Jewish visual aesthetic tradition, which *Al Tigu* certainly refutes, it does not necessarily translate into an adherence to Christian principles, as *Balagan* would seem to have it--which is by no means to deny the significant historical role of Christian theology in both the institution and continued support for a Jewish Israel and, apropos of Marx, for the related project of Western global imperialism.⁵⁰ Henceforth, the question might become one of whether, in deference to *Al Tigu*, *Balagan's* superprotagonal troping of 'Holocaust' does not ironically reify the Israel-Palestine conflict's material history at the expense of at least proposing a relevant and applicable political means toward its equitable, worldly resolution.⁵¹ What, after all, does it mean to figure the Israel-Palestine conflict as a Christian moral exemplar of the European/American social imaginary, especially from within the context of a reunified, Protestant Germany that has come quickly to dominate a post-Cold War Europe now itself unified economically for the first time since the Holy Roman Empire and poised to reap the financial benefits of an 'endless', exceedingly brutal U.S.-led global war, the epicenter of which is the Middle East?⁵² Surely we have not forgotten the last time 'Semitic' differentiation became a favored 'tropic' instance.

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Notes

1. For the complete text, see Karl Marx, *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, ed. Lucio Colletti (New York: Vintage Books, 1975). The pertinent lines are, "Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people" (244).
2. I define the Holocaust as the systematic, industrialized mass murder of approximately twelve million people, including Jews (who comprised a disproportionately large percentage of victims), Roma (Sinto and Lalleri 'Gypsies'), Soviet prisoners of war, lesbians and gays ('homosexuals'), political resisters (communists, socialists, trade-unionists, and Freemasons), dissident religious groups (Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesuits, Huegonots), Slavs (Poles, Czechs, Ukrainians, Belorussians), and the mentally and physically infirm and disabled, under the auspices of the German National Socialist Party ('Nazis') during the Second World War.
3. The film's print media reception in Israel was lukewarm, and its exhibition there similarly restricted. I have no further information about additional screenings or reception of *Balagan* except for those in Italy, where print media criticism was likewise cool. Particularly negative reviews included: Susan Gerhard, "Blasphemera," *San Francisco Bay Guardian* 20 July 1994: 38; Leah Garchick, rev. in *San Francisco Chronicle* 25 July 1994: E6; Chris Vognar, "Jewish Films on the Edge," *The Daily Californian* (n.d.); and Dennis Harvey, rev. in *Variety* 19 Dec. 1994: 1 Jan. 1995: 76-77. Contrast Ilsa Lund, rev. in *Moving Pictures* 17 Feb. 1994; Hajo, rev. in *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung* 18 Feb. 1994; Sven Siebert and Evelyn Gratzfeld, rev. in *Dok Festival Leipzig* 30 Nov. 1993; Margit Voss, rev. in *Neues Deutschland* 3 Dec. 1993; "Balagan: Premiere in Frankfurt," rev. in *Film-Echo/Filmwoche* 29 April 1994: 14; Martin Rabius, "Balagan," *EPD Film* 11.5 (1994): 44; Ron Holloway, "Balagan," *Kino* 55 (Aug. 94): 12-13; and Herbert Seifer, rev. in *Neue Zürische Zeitung* 9 Dec. 1993.

Originally, distribution rights to *Balagan* were held by a German company, Arsenal Films. Until about 1996, international distribution rights were held by Pinnacle Pictures of London. Subsequently, all distribution rights reverted to Klaus Volkenborn, *Balagan's* producer, who, in the author's experience, has been consistently evasive regarding requests to rent or sell *Balagan* at any price, in any format. (Private correspondence corroborating this claim is available from the author upon request.) *Balagan* continues nonetheless to be listed in most film catalogs and online databases as either "not available" (true) or "distributed by Arsenal Films" (untrue).

4. As stated in the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962. See Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989). Seminal German texts of this critical tendency are Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverley R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975); and its renowned predecessor, Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961).
5. A documentary compilation of the major texts of the *Historikerstreit* is James Knowlton and Truett Cates, trans., *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?: Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1993). See also Alfred D. Low, *The Third Reich and the Holocaust in German Historiography: Toward the Historikerstreit of the Mid-1980s* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs/Columbia University Press, 1994). For an analysis of the French debates, see Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
6. "Recent Films from Germany," Museum of Modern Art, Dec. 1996; also *Die Überlebenden [The Survivors]*, Veiel's 1995 film on the precise subject of German "second-generation perpetrators." Prior West German films have drawn similar connections, if only to contain them through reaction to feminist and anti-colonialist struggles. Exemplary are *Die Bleierne Zeit [Marianne and Juliane]* (dir. Margarethe von Trotta, 1981); and *Die Fälschung [Circle of Deceit]* (dir. Volker Schlöndorff, 1980: 81).
7. E.g., the North American academic journal, *Israel Studies*, published since 1995 by Indiana University Press, and the more longstanding *Journal of*

- Palestine Studies*; also, in chronological order, Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (London: Croon Helm, 1979); Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Boston: South End Press, 1983); Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ilan Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-51* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Israel's Fateful Hour*, trans. Lenn Schramm (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; rev. and exp. ed. 1994); Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Akiva Orr, *Israel: Politics, Myths and Identity Crisis* (London and Boulder, CO: Pluto Press, 1994); Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, forward by Gore Vidal (London and Boulder, CO: Pluto Press, 1994); Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London and New York: Verso, 1995); Naseer H. Aruri, *The Obstruction of Peace: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995); Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 1999); Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2000); Pappé, *The Making of the Arab/Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001); and Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002). These articulations of historical revisionism should be distinguished from the reactionary Holocaust revisionism that gained international notoriety during the 1980s.
8. Régine-Mihal Friedman, "The Double Legacy of *Arbeit Macht Frei*," *Prooftexts* 22 (Fall-Winter 2002): 204; and Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997).
 9. Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany: Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 12-50.
 10. E.g., the previously cited films directed by Schlöndorff and by von Trotta.

11. As deployed by John Rosenthal, *The Myth of Dialectics: Reinterpreting the Marx-Hegel Relation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. x, qtd. Manfred B. Steger, rev. in *New Political Science* 22.1 (2000): 125.
12. See the essays collected under "Constellation C; The Jewish Question: Politics of Subjectivity," *Perspectives on German Cinema*, eds. Terri Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson (New York and London: G. K. Hall/Prentice Hall International, 1996), pp. 161-250. See also Vidal-Naquet op cit.; and Norman G. Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn, *A Nation on Trial: The Goldbagen Thesis and Historical Truth* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998).
13. Franklin Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986); and James R. Watson, *Between Auschwitz and Perdition: Postmodern Reflections on the Task of Thinking* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1994).
14. For instance Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth, TX: Texas Christian University, 1976); and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense*, trans. Hubert J. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964). In the contemporary public sphere, where Christian theology is only a secondary co-efficient of modern, including Nazi, anti-Semitism, for which race, not religion, marks the rungs of social hierarchy and Jew-hatred, posthistorical theories have become powerful ideological tools for ostensibly humanitarian interests actually to encourage a missionary application of christology to non-Jewish genocides and 'ethnic cleansings' and to non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. See Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York and London: The New Press, 2003). Among other things, this practice serves to obscure other, more far-reaching models for understanding and comparing those genocides for which, as I shall demonstrate, the christological framework remains nonetheless relevant. A very recent cinematic example of this tendency is the otherwise interesting and important film, *Lumumba* (dir. Raoul Peck, France/Belgium/Germany/Haiti, 2000), the North American premier of which was held in New York City at the 2001 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. Human Rights Watch is a non-profit humanitarian watchdog organization that receives funding and direction from the neoliberal Soros Foundation.
15. Insofar as christology is a byproduct of early Jewish rabbinical (Phariseac) culture, and notwithstanding its later incorporation by/into Christian eschatology, I choose to refrain from capitalizing the term in this paper.

Cf. Susannah Heschel, "Revolt of the Colonized: Abraham Geiger's *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a Challenge to Christian Hegemony in the Academy," *New German Critique* 77 (Spring-Summer 1999): 61-85.

16. "[F]or a society based upon the production of commodities, in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labour to the standard of homogeneous human labour--for such a society, Christianity with its *cultus* of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion," from Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof," in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol I.: *The Process of Capital Accumulation*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Friedrich Engels (1867; New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 83. For an important qualification of Marx's formulation as it misrecognizes the role of Judaism in this context, see Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews* (London: Zed Books, 1987), pp. 130-132.
17. The concept is deployed famously, critically, by Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 93.
18. Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, trans. Thomas Weir (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer, *Nazi-retro Film: How German Narrative Cinema Remembers the Past* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992). Examples of Nazi *rétro* films include *The Night Porter* [*Portiere di notte*] (dir. Liliana Cavani, Italy, 1974); *The Damned* [*La Caduta degli Dei*] (dir. Luchino Visconti, Italy, 1969); *Seven Beauties* [*Pasqualino Settebellezze*] (dir. Lina Wertmüller, Italy, 1975); *Mephisto* (dir. István Szabó, Hungary, 1981); and *Lili Marleen* (dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, West Germany, 1981).
19. Peter Michelson, *Speaking the Unspeakable: A Poetics of Obscenity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), p. xi.
20. For a sustained elaboration of "carnavalesque" as I employ it here, see Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Carnival, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 85-156 and *passim*.
21. It is because of such depictions and, more frequently, those of female nakedness, and not because of the proverbial, oft-misunderstood Judaic

- proscription against fideistic imagery, that Jewish orthodoxy has so consistently repudiated visual documentation of the Holocaust (not to mention sexually explicit Holocaust narrative films depicting both male and female nakedness [corpses] and nudity [living beings]). Cf. David Novick, "The Law of Idolatry," *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983). For an elaboration with respect to Holocaust film, see Terri Ginsberg, "Holocaust Film Criticism and the Politics of Judeo-Christian Phenomenology," in J. David Slocum, ed., *Violence and American Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
22. As conceived in Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (1973; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993).
 23. See Andrew Hewitt, *Political Inversions: Homosexuality, Fascism, and the Modernist Imaginary* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).
 24. Edward R. Isser, *Stages of Annihilation: Theatrical Representation of the Holocaust* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997), p. 20. Indeed in the contemporary postmodern context, ostensivity is commensurate with the anti-representational functioning of the hyperrealist simulacrum, a reflexive signficatory field devoid of referential models, whether real or ideal. In the context of Holocaust cultural studies, ostensivity may be compared to the phenomenology of reception aesthetics, for which cultural occasions are rhetorically overdeterminant. See Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, trans. William Weaver (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983); Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum," trans. Rosalind Krauss, *October* 27 (Winter 1983); and Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).
 25. As discussed in Kriss Ravetto, *The Unmaking of Fascist Aesthetics* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 81-87. See also Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (1946; New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1970); and Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press).
 26. Gad Kaynar, "'Get Out of the Picture, Kid in a Cap': On the Interaction of the Israeli Drama and Reality Convention," in Linda Ben-Zvi, ed.,

- Theater in Israel* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 288-89; also idem, "What's Wrong with the Usual Description of the Extermination?!" National Socialism and the Holocaust as a Self-image Metaphor in Israeli Drama: Aesthetic Conversion of a National Tragedy into Reality-Convention," *Theatron* 17 (1996): 213-216. Ritual meals such as the *massachet* (what Freud might have referred to as a "totemic" ritual) have served a particular, ideological function in official Israeli Holocaust education. See Avner Ben-Amos and Ilana Bet-El, "Holocaust Day and Memorial Day in Israeli Schools: Ceremonies, Education and History," *Israel Studies* 4.1 (1999): 258-284. It is not irrelevant to note that the word, *massachet*, is related etymologically to another Hebrew word, *massach*, which refers to the cinematic screen.
27. Bertolt Brecht, "The Epic Theatre," in Eric Bentley, ed., *The Theory of the Modern Stage: An Introduction to Modern Theater and Drama* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); also John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study in Eight Aspects* (New York: New Directions, 1959), p. 167.
 28. Grotowski is known, *inter alia*, for his Christian existentialist mystery plays, *Apocalypse cum figuris* and *Akropolis*, each of which was subject to cinematic documentation, and the latter of which is set in Auschwitz. See Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski and His Laboratory*, trans. and ed. Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay (New York: PAJ Publishers, 1986); Tadeusz Burzyński and Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski's Laboratory* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1979); and Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985).
 29. Cf. Dinora Pines, "The Impact of the Holocaust on the Second Generation," *A Woman's Unconscious Use of Her Body* (London: Virago, 1993), pp. 205-225; Ronit Lantin, "Re-occupying the Territories of Silence: Israeli Daughters of Shoah Survivors between Language and Silence," in Esther Fuchs, ed., *Women and the Holocaust: Narrative and Representation* (Lanham, MD, New York, Oxford: University Presses of America, 1999), pp. 47-62; and Linda Kintz, "Gendering the Critique of Representation: Fascism, the Purified Body, and Theater in Adorno, Artaud, and Maria Irene Fornes," *Rethinking Marxism* 4.3 (1991): 83-100.
 30. Kaynar "Get Out of the Picture, Kid in a Cap," pp. 288-290.
 31. Cinema Studies usage of this concept is associated with Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton,

- Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). Metz draws from Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative Function of the 'I,'" *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1977); and Emile Benveniste, "The Nature of Pronouns," *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971).
32. For a classic analysis of the Mizrahi relationship to Zionism, see Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims," *Social Text* 19-20 (1988): 1-35. For an elaborated historical background, see Jada' Jiladi, *Discord in Zion: Conflict between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in Israel* (London: Scorpion Publishing, 1990). For a situation of that background in the larger context of Jewish history, see Halevi *op cit*.
 33. Regarding Muslim and Judaic circumcision, respectively, see Abdelwahab Bouhdiba and Abdu Khal, "Festivities of Violence: Circumcision and the Making of Men," and Yoram Bilu, "Circumcision, the First Haircut and the Torah: Ritual and Male Identity Among the Ultraorthodox Community of Israel," in Mai Ghoussoub and Emma Sinclair-Webb, eds., *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East* (London: Saqi Books, 2000), pp. 19-32; 33-64. See also Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). A useful, christological interpretation of circumcision is Julia Reinhard Lipton, "Ethnos and Circumcision in the Pauline Tradition: A Psychoanalytic Exegesis," in Christopher Lane, ed., *The Psychoanalysis of Race* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 193-210.
 34. For an extended analysis of the 'ethnic' dissimulation of race and racism, see Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).
 35. I employ 'Semitic' in full recognition of the twofold fact that, as Middle-Eastern indigenes, both Moni and Khaled are ethno-cultural Arabs, and that the designation of Arab culture as 'Semitic' invokes a racist paradigm appropriated from prevailing linguistic theory by French pseudo-scientist, Ernest Renan, and deployed perniciously against European Jewry during the last third of Nineteenth Century. See Renan, *Etudes d'histoire religieuse* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1862).

36. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 162. See also Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin (1975; Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1987).
37. Regarding the morbid function of Woman in Romanticism, especially its political connotations, see Beth Ann Bassein, *Women and Death: Linkages in Western Thought and Literature* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1984); Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York: Twayne Publishers; Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1995); and Nancy L. Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1987). Regarding the myth of the "Wandering Jew," see the collection, Galit Hasen-Roker and Alan Dundes, eds., *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986).
38. For an interesting analysis of how the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe was itself overdetermined by the prior and ongoing legacy of European colonialism, see Traverso op cit. For the classic analysis of Israel/Palestine as a European colony, see Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973).
39. See Hyam Maccoby, "The Wandering Jew as Sacred Executioner," Roker and Dundes *ibid.* pp. 236-260.
40. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1962). Debates over the relationship between Heideggerian philosophy and Nazi ideology are rehearsed in Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis, eds., *The Heidegger Case: on Philosophy and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993); and Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
41. Cf. Martin W. Kloeke, *Israel und die deutsche linke: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen, 1994); Inge Deutschkron, *Bonn und Jerusalem: The Strange Coalition* (Philadelphia and London: Chilton Book Company, 1970); Lily Gardner Feldman, *The Special Relationship between West Germany and Israel* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984); and Angelika Timm, "The Burdened

- Relationship between the GDR and Israel," *Israel Studies* 2.1 (1997): 22-49. Regarding Hollywood as a global industry, see Fehrenbach op cit.; John Davidson, "Hegemony and Cinematic Strategy," *Perspectives on German Cinema* op cit. pp. 48-71; and Toby Miller, *Global Hollywood* (London: BFI, 2001). For a relevant contextualization, see Christopher Innes, "Secular Religions and Physical Spirituality," *Avant Garde Theater, 1892-1992* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 149-166.
42. Surely not unrelated to this structural politics is the fact that *Arbeit Macht Frei* was performed in Germany following its initial run in Akko, whereupon Veiel, a former cognitive-behaviorist psychologist, student of Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda, and occasional instructor at Berlin's Künstlerhaus Bethanien (an Evangelical ["Confessional"] Church-sponsored cultural institute), saw the play when it traveled to Germany and became interested in transcribing it cinematically. As Yosefa Loshitzky has indicated, Veiel managed successfully to solicit ample funding for *Balagan* from both the German and Israeli governments, but at the expense of like funding for the Israeli-produced *Al Tigu*, also at that time in pre-production. Yosefa Loshitzky, "Memory in Transition: Second Generation Israelis Tell the Holocaust," Society for Cinema Studies Conference, Ottawa, Canada, 1997. See also Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).
43. Terri Ginsberg, *Regarding the Holocaust: Politics of Hermeneutics in Contemporary Holocaust Film* (forthcoming).
44. Examples are its proclivities 1) to displace, while seeming merely to analogize, the Israel-Palestine conflict on/to the Jewish-German axis; 2) to limit analytic scope to Europe and the Middle East, thereby eliding the U.S. role in the conflict; 3) to downplay the function of 'Holocaust' in Palestinian identity formation; and 4) to neglect any reference whatsoever to Marxist critiques of 'Holocaust.'
45. For more on this role, see Tom Segev, "Restitution: How Much Will We Get for Grandma and Grandpa?" *The Seventh Million* op cit. pp. 189-252.
46. Alan R. Taylor, *The Zionist Mind: The Origins and Development of Zionist Thought* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974); Elmer Berger, *Memoirs of an Anti-Zionist Jew* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978); Nathan Weinstock, *Zionism: False Messiah*, trans. Alan Adler (London: Ink Links, 1979); and Eibie Weizfeld, ed., *The End of Zionism and the Liberation of the Jewish People* (Atlanta and Windsor, ON: Clarity Press, 1989); and

- Roselle Tekiner, Samir Abed-Rabbo, and Norton Mezvinsky, eds., *Anti-Zionism: Analytical Reflections* (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1989).
47. Sam Bahour and Michael Dahan, "Genocide by Public Policy," *New from Within* 20.3 (2004): 4-5.
 48. See Shahak and Mezvinsky op cit. for an extensive elaboration of the notion of Israel as a Jewish theological ethnocracy. Also relevant is Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, trans. Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 79-144.
 49. David C. Jacobson, "The Ma'ale School: Catalyst for the Entrance of Religious Zionists into the World of Media Production," *Israel Studies* 9.1 (2004): 36. Interestingly, the Christian imagery and symbolism utilized by secular Jewish Israelis marks what could be postulated as a visual rapprochement with their messianic, ultra-orthodox adversaries that serves well the secular-religious rapprochement currently being renegotiated in Israel, the aim of which is a "New Zionist Hegemony," a preservation of Jewish ethnocracy in the context of Israel attempting finally to draw up an official state constitution. Jonathan Cook, "Israeli Constitutional Committee Faces Double Bind," *Middle East Report* 231 (Summer 2004): 16-21.
 50. For challenges to the perceived absence of a Jewish visual aesthetic tradition, see Kalman P. Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Anthony Julius, *Idolizing Pictures: Idolatry, Iconoclasm and Jewish Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000). For analyses of Christian Zionism, see Regina S. Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism: Its Roots in Western History* (London: Zed Books, 1983); and Paul Charles Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism 1891-1948* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998).
 51. For a recent materialist analysis of the conflict, see Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, *The Global Political Economy of Israel* (London and Stirling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002). Of related interest are Bishara Bahbah, *Israel and Latin America: The Military Connection* (New York: St. Martin's Press; Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1986); G. H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971); and Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York: Grove Press, 1991).

52. One need only consider Joschka Fischer's recent Greater Middle East Initiative, which positions Germany as a 'neutral' negotiator between Israel, Washington, and the Arab/Muslim world, as well as the support offered by a majority of the United Nations General Assembly for Germany to be granted a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. Paul Hockenos, "German Greens and Pax Europa: Joschka Fischer Envisions a European Alternative to American Hegemony," *The Nation* 12-26 July 2004: 27.